



Fraud Newsletter

March 2007

Sheriff Steve Mansfield

Fraud and ID Theft Information – To Better Protect the Residents of Lewis County

*"If it's too good to be true
it normally is"*

Fraud is simply a theft by trick. It can take the form of chain letters claiming huge amounts of cash to those who send money in or people claiming they will provide a service and never do.

Identity theft and identity fraud are terms used to refer to all types of crimes in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's personal data in a way that involves fraud or deception for economic gain. This newsletter is intended to keep the public informed of the most recent fraud schemes happening in our county. It will also provide resources to help you take precautions to protect yourself from these vicious crimes.

PROTECT YOUR ID

- 1** Always know who you are providing personal information to
- 2** If you use passwords to access accounts make sure to change them often
- 3** Never provide personal information in response to any unsolicited offer
- 4** Know the company you are dealing with when making online purchases

Current Scams and Frauds Hitting Lewis County

Senior Frauds

We know that US Consumers lose billions of dollars to fraud every year. People over 50 are especially vulnerable and account for over half of all fraud victims. Lewis County has experienced a marked increase in crimes targeted against this age group. People who commit these types of crimes often target older people knowing they have spent a lifetime earning their savings. These criminals go wherever they can to find money to steal. They use everyday tools - the mailbox, the telephone, the Internet – to reach into your pockets. Older adults are prime targets for dishonest firms which deliberately prey on the goodness, loneliness, and sometimes gullibility of people who have reached their golden years. In this issue of the newsletter we will address one of those methods and ways to protect yourself.

Telemarketing Fraud

"Internet fraud is the fastest growing crime in the US"

As technology has developed so has the sophistication of the con artist. Telephones, fax machines, and computers have become "tools of the trade" for fraudulent telemarketers who scam consumers and businesses out of billions of dollars annually. Legitimate businesses also use the same "tools" to sell their products, so consumers need to recognize the warning signs associated with fraudulent telemarketers.

Fraudulent telemarketers attempt many of the same old schemes over and over again. They may attempt to convince you that you have just won a prize, or they might attempt to gain your support of a charity. Others want you to buy a wide range of products, such as magazines, vitamins, vacations, lottery tickets, club memberships, or other promotional items.

Not all telemarketing calls are scams. You should run through a mental checklist before giving any unsolicited caller money or credit card information. Ask yourself these questions:

- **Does the caller refuse to give you time to make up your mind about the offer?**
- **Does the caller refuse to mail you information?**
- **Does the caller pressure you for your credit card number?**
- **Do you have to pay to win a "free prize" or enter a "contest"?**
- **Does the caller offer to send a courier to your house to pick up money or a check?**
- **Does the offer sound too good to be true?**
- **Are you buying something based only on what the caller tells you?**

"Vigilance is the only real protection against Internet fraud"

If you answered yes to any of these questions then - HANG UP.



The internet is a powerful tool used by both legitimate businesses and scam artists alike. Always take steps to protect yourself and your personal information as you would protect your home or car.

Other Resources

Phone Busters (Canadian Link) - <http://www.phonebusters.com/>

The Federal Citizen Information Center -
<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission - <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The FBI Fraud Information page -
<http://www.fbi.gov/maicases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>

The Internet Crime Complaint Center - <http://www.ic3.gov/>

Lewis County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

To make a positive difference for members of our community by seeking and finding ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality service.



Sheriff Steve Mansfield

Committed to make a difference.